

6 steps and 4 suggestions to prepare for January's machine safety blitz and beyond

Prepare for a January 18 to February 26, 2016 inspection blitz on the safe operation of machinery. The blitz will focus on machines that are not guarded, blocked or locked out during maintenance, repair and other operations. "If it were my workplace," says WSPS consultant Robert Vomiero, "I'd immediately take steps to control high-risk hazards, and then plot an ongoing hazard control strategy."

Machinery injuries have been a prevention priority since the dawn of the industrial age, but workers continue to sustain injuries with disturbing frequency. In 2013, the Workplace Safety and Insurance Board received lost-time injury (LTI) claims from 1,641 workers caught in or compressed by equipment.

"I still see a lot of equipment out there that's not guarded, or the guarding is inadequate," says Vomiero. "For instance, a fence that's too low to prevent me from reaching over and touching a moving robot."

Mindful of the upcoming inspection blitz, Vomiero proposes a short-term safeguarding strategy. He also recommends following up with a more comprehensive, ongoing strategy that you can integrate into your workplace's overall health and safety program.

6 steps to take now

1. **Compile a list of every machine, station, production line, and cell** within your facility.
2. **For each piece of equipment, make a list of all accessible equipment hazards or safeguards** that you can reach under, over, through, or around. Look for
 - in-running nips, draw-in hazards, and any type of pinch point, crushing, shearing, impact
 - energy isolation points for lockout purposes, such as electrical lockout points, pneumatic lockout points, and sources of hydraulic, thermal, and potential energy (e.g., gravity falls)
3. **Conduct a high-level physical inspection** of each piece of machinery, targeting high-risk equipment first. For example, hand loaded power presses and robot cells. Vomiero recommends involving someone from maintenance and/or engineering, as well as a health and safety specialist. If your workplace doesn't have a dedicated specialist, then involve the joint health and safety committee or health and safety representative. While conducting the inspection, observe workers using the machinery. Watch for potential musculoskeletal (MSD) hazards that could result from awkward postures and repetitive activities. Ask the supervisor and operators questions about hazards that might not be immediately evident.
4. **Make a plan for correcting each safeguarding deficiency**, targetting the highest risks first. Include completion dates and who's responsible so that if an inspector asks you can show them what's being done. Avoid the temptation to correct all the issues on one machine before proceeding to the next.
5. **If your workplace has internal know-how, correct the deficiencies in house.** Otherwise, bring in an external contractor. Better to have the work done than risk inspectors' orders, an equipment shutdown or, worst of all, an injury.
6. **Follow up to make sure that the improvements are effective**, aren't creating new hazards, and don't impede operators to the point where they're tempted to circumvent the safeguards.

4 considerations for an ongoing safeguarding strategy

The challenge with any strategy is to sustain it over the long-term. Here's a sampling of Robert Vomiero's suggestions for an ongoing safeguarding strategy. Watch for more on them and others in an upcoming issue of *WSPS Network News*.

- 1. Establish a formal risk assessment process that applies methodologies suited to your business.**
- 2. Assess machine safety twice**, once assuming there are no safeguards and again after you've identified possible safeguards.
- 3. Develop an internal equipment safety evaluation/audit process.** Include criteria that would trigger an evaluation/audit, such as a new piece of equipment or process.
- 4. Ensure your procurement process takes regulations and standards into account** so that new equipment and processes enter your workplaces already compliant.

How WSPS can help

We can help with every aspect of machine safety, from conducting hazard assessments to assembling a comprehensive machine safety program.

Learn more about the safe operation of machinery blitz by registering for the live webinar scheduled for January 12 or by watching the recorded version <http://www.wspcs.ca/Shop/Training/Webinars/Safe-Operation-of-Machinery-blitz.aspx>

Check out our safeguarding and lockout resource page <http://www.wspcs.ca/Information-Resources/Topics/Guarding-Lockout.aspx>. You'll find a list of applicable legislation, public training, self-paced training, pre-recorded webinars, and downloads.

View these six videos, featuring WSPS machine safety specialist Michael Wilson:

- [Understand your risks](#)
- [Safeguard your machines](#)
- [Know your safeguarding options](#)
- [Understand the Pre-Start Health and Safety Review](#)
- [Control hazardous energy with a lockout program](#)
- [Assess your safeguarding in four easy steps](#)

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